



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

DEQ PREPARES FOR OZONE SEASON

BATON ROUGE -- Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco got ozone season started by proclaiming May as Clean Air Month. Ozone season typically runs from May 1 to Sept. 30.

Ground-level ozone is an air pollutant that is formed when certain precursors, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, are "cooked" on warm, sunny and still days. High levels of ozone are considered unsafe, and can make breathing difficult. Ozone is also a key ingredient of smog.

Although two recently released reports showed Louisiana making much progress in air quality, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is urging industries and citizens to be aware of activities that may contribute to the formation of ozone.

"This is the time of year when our actions directly impact our air quality," said DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel. "Louisiana has made great strides in air quality and we want to continue that trend. Everyone needs to do their part."

The Environmental Protection Agency recently released its report on the new, more stringent eight-hour ozone standard. That report had the five-parish Baton Rouge area listed as a marginal nonattainment area. The American Lung Association's State of the Air report had seven parishes receiving higher grades in 2004 than 2003.

The trend of better air quality didn't stop concerned citizens from industry, the five-parish area communities and state agencies from attending an Ozone Action Coordinators meeting on Friday, April 30, to hear how they can help the area control ozone levels this summer. The coordinators will be in close contact with DEQ officials and will alert peers and co-workers when there is a possible high ozone day. By spreading the word, people should voluntarily take the necessary steps to keep ozone-forming pollutants to a minimum.

Those steps include mowing after 6 p.m., gassing up your vehicle after 6 p.m. and carpooling. For more information on ozone, check the DEQ web site at <http://www.deq.state.la.us/evaluation/ozone/index.htm>.

While the area of East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston and Iberville are the only areas classified by EPA for ozone nonattainment, it is advised that all state residents be aware of ozone levels in their region and start the summer with a clean air month.